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PROFESSIONAL PROGRESS IN NURSING¹

By F. G. DU BOIS, M.D.

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The semi-centennial of the foundation of the profession of scientific nursing is just past. In the fifty-four years following the establishment of the first training school for nursing in the truly modern sense, you have kept pace with the marvelous development characterizing the most progressive half-century in the world's history. Yours is a profession in the highest conception of the human product, scientific, educational, and beneficent. The aim is to standardize the efficiency of the individual. The organization of a professional society is an effort toward the advanced development of its adherents.

The motives of nearly all scientific associations are generally misunderstood by the public as being selfish, exclusive, and mercenary. The effort of your organization in the state of Alabama to obtain legal status by legislative enactment is a worthy step in the path of progress. Primarily by raising the standard of the professional nurse protection is afforded to both the efficient nurses, and the people whom they serve. The power of conferring the degree of registered nurse legally after examination by a state board of examiners with the state health officer as chairman would secure professional standing and recognition in a permanent manner in this state. The necessary laws for maintaining the effectiveness of your organization are difficult to obtain from the legislature because of the opposition of many of the medical profession who are fearful that perhaps too stringent or restrictive measures may be passed that would eliminate the undergraduate nurse's assistance in private practice, and possibly handicap the operation of hospitals and training schools throughout the state. This is neither an unreasonable nor an ungrounded fear, and has a precedent in the state of California having recently passed an eight-hour law for women working in that state, specifically including hospitals and training schools. The influence of union labor won out over the opposition of both doctors and nurses.

Much wisdom and discretion should be used in the framing of laws for the purpose of elevating the standard of trained nurses by your organization. Despise not small beginnings in statutory enactments and from these larger developments will follow as the natural sequence of efficiency and patient effort.

¹ Read at the Alabama State Nurses' Association meeting.

There is much work and influence needed outside of the lobby at the Capitol in Montgomery. It is among the training schools of the state. Only three years have passed since the first and only law was enacted by the legislature of Alabama empowering hospitals with the authority of conferring the degree of graduate nurse. Hospitals qualifying under this enactment must be approved and recommended by the state board of health. Like all beginnings the curriculum is low, the requirements under the enactment are variable. A minimum of a two years' course, and of a certain number of lecture hours has been agreed upon, and if adhered to by the hospital, and lived up to by the staff, is sufficient to turn out graduate nurses that will do for private work, but it is below the standard of many of the eastern and northern states so that graduates of some of these hospitals may fail of registry under your proposed requirements and may be ineligible to go before the registrar of all of the states for examination.

There are abuses under this system which can and should be corrected in the course of time through the efforts made by your organization. A commission should be appointed by you to visit the hospitals which have training schools and a report made to your association and then recommendations through its officers to the state health officer. You may find that some are not giving lectures, that no systematic course is given in others, and that except for the years of actual service nothing else is done to fit the pupil for her life's work. These and many other irregularities should be looked into by your commission, and they can be corrected through the state health officer or through publicity. Unfairness and injustice cannot survive the searchlight of truth brought to the eyes of the general public. Abraham Flexner's report for the Rockefeller Commission closed nearly all of the low grade medical schools in the United States, and a report from you will correct the evils which may lower the standard of your profession in its elementary training in the schools throughout the state. With all our boasted progress in every vocation we are even now on the threshold of ultimate development. By steadfastness of purpose an earned increment is added to the world's progress, and by failure one human unit is detracted from the sum total of universal uplift. Standing on the shifting sands of the plain of life we are tossed hither or thither by the relentless spirit of time.

We are just beginning to see the dawn of the world's civilization: when the despot shall rule no more, when czars, majesties, princes and peers shall be reduced to the ranks, and be as they should be, man to man, when there shall be no semblance of temporal divine right; no excellency save that of merit; no hereditary power save the heritage

of a healthy body and a sound mind, and no class save that superiority of individual effort and attainment; when there shall be no king save the King of Peace, and no caste save that of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God.

The blackened clouds of a horrible world-war now arise from the mist of the crimson rivers, the thunders of the valleys, and the echo of the hills is today the cannons' roar. The lightning's flash that cleaves the stormy horizon is the bursting shell; the hail is that of lead and steel; the wild wind is the onrush of men in mortal conflict; and the dead and dying, as the leaves after an autumn bluster, cover the soil. From out of all this carnage; from the wanton waste of human life; from the ashes of cities; from the crumbled spires of cathedrals, patterned from the dream of the inspired architect and built after years of patient toil; from out of the homes bereft of father, son and brother; from the flood of hopeless tears; and from the low and sobbing moan of the wife and mother sickened with anguish and broken with grief will there not again breathe a spirit of peace on earth and good will towards men such as the Master taught two thousand years ago!

"Through a rift in those clouds of battle, like a rainbow gleaming above the storm we catch a glint from the aureole" of the nurses with the army, the angels in the war; the hope of the wounded, the relief of the sufferer, and the solace of the dying. The inspiration of Florence Nightingale and the devoted influence of Clara Barton live after them in the thousands, who, in the presence of the personal peril, are giving all of the service they have to give in the valley of the shadow of death trying to mend the Master's broken vessels, shattered by the hands of kings, pawned for the re-vindication of empires.

These are heroics. The glamor, the uncertainty, the dramatic and tragic setting of a great national or world affair is attractive, and draws many by the mesmerism of these forces. It is the commonplace and the monotony of the rank and file that require the greater efforts to overcome in the daily performance of humdrum duties. In the silent conflicts in our profession are required more courage and heroism than that mingled in the world's conspicuous tragedies. It is to the unhonored and unsung daily worker that real human progress is due. The mob, the mass, and the army are iconoclastic rather than constructive. It is to the individual development one must look for universal uplift—the unrestrained opportunity to live, labor and develop. Education and the consequent intellectuality is an indomitable force, and woman in her acquisition of these is becoming a conspicuous power in furthering the world's progress. Prominent among the professions dominated by woman is that of trained nurse, and it is through this along with

others that emancipation of woman is coming. It is through persistent efforts that we achieve usefulness. "No one can be good who is not useful, nor can one enjoy that which he has not truly earned." The magic key to the treasures of this world is work. It fits the lock in the door of happiness which opens the house of contentment. It is the key to that kingdom of God which kingdom is in the body of mankind.

NURSING CARE OF CRIPPLED CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

By ADELE KOEHLER McMURTRIE

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In the care of crippled children cure or improvement is usually a slow process. Daily régime and living conditions are often of more importance than positive surgical or therapeutic measures. Thus it follows that nursing oversight is an important feature of the work.

There are several types of nursing in this field. First, there is the follow-up visiting nursing in conjunction with orthopedic dispensary or out-patient work. Second, there is the care of children in institutions. Third, there is general visiting and special work.

The special orthopedic dispensary is a development of comparatively recent years and is an institution of American inception. Abroad, particularly on the continent, care for cripples is provided almost exclusively in resident hospitals and homes. But here, in order to cope with the magnitude of the demands, it was necessary to make some extension of the resident work. It was found that reasonably satisfactory results could be obtained in many orthopedic cases by the out-patient method, and large dispensary services grew up. Under this system diagnoses are made, treatment prescribed and braces and apparatus applied.

But the dispensary work had inherent in it several defects when applied to orthopedics. In the first place the required period of treatment was long and the necessity for frequent and continued visits was not manifest to the patient, so many of the patients lapsed through non-attendance, and much work well done was wasted. Again the average patient was not competent to follow out at home the surgeon's directions as to regimen, diet and so forth. Thus much well-intentioned effort on both sides proved ineffective.

The one additional feature necessary to remedy both defects, and provide positive advantages as well, was a system of visiting nursing. Nurses specially selected for this work could see the case and receive